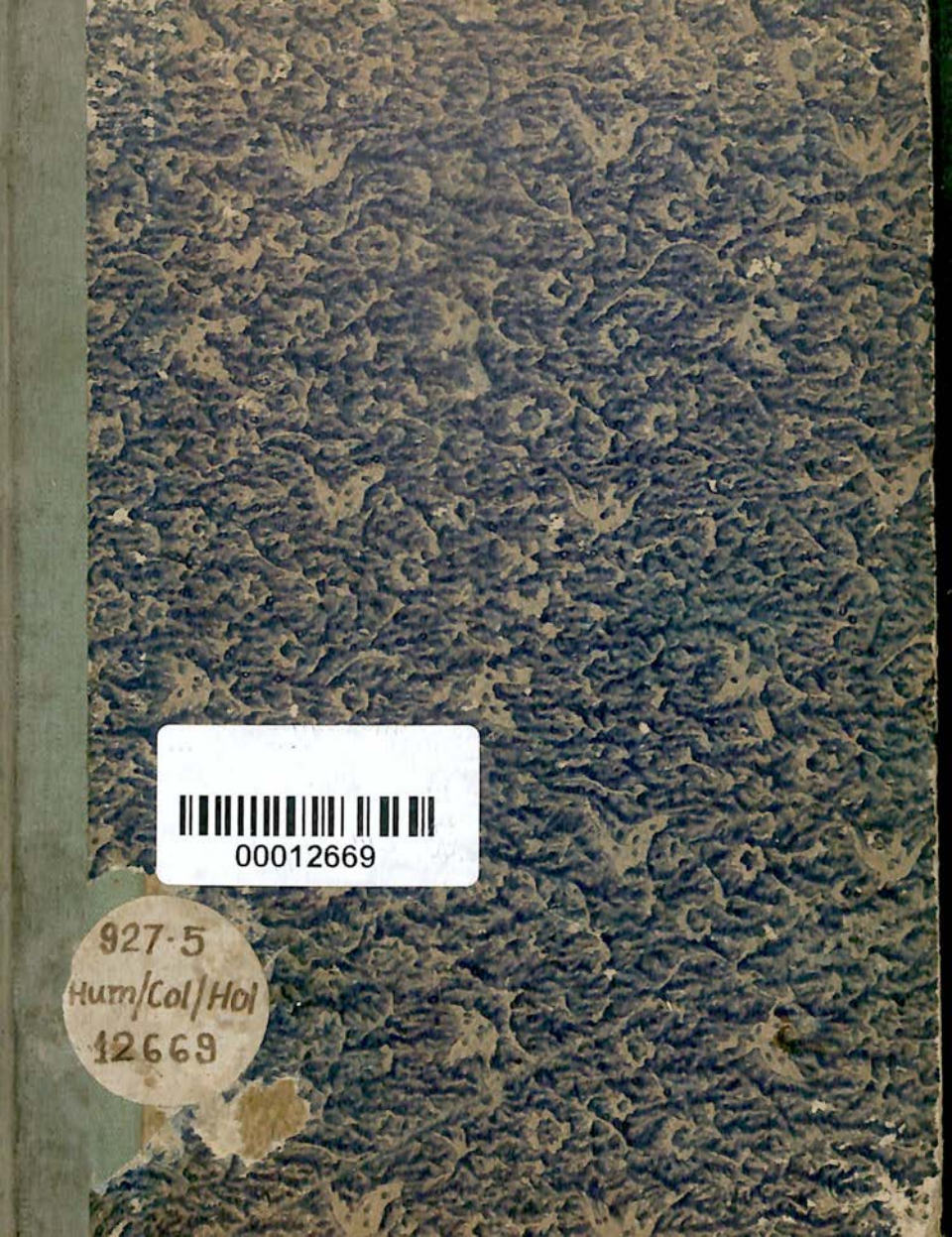
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Holman Hunt

BY MARY E. COLERIDGE

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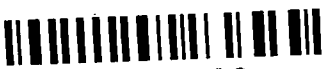

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By kind permission of the painter

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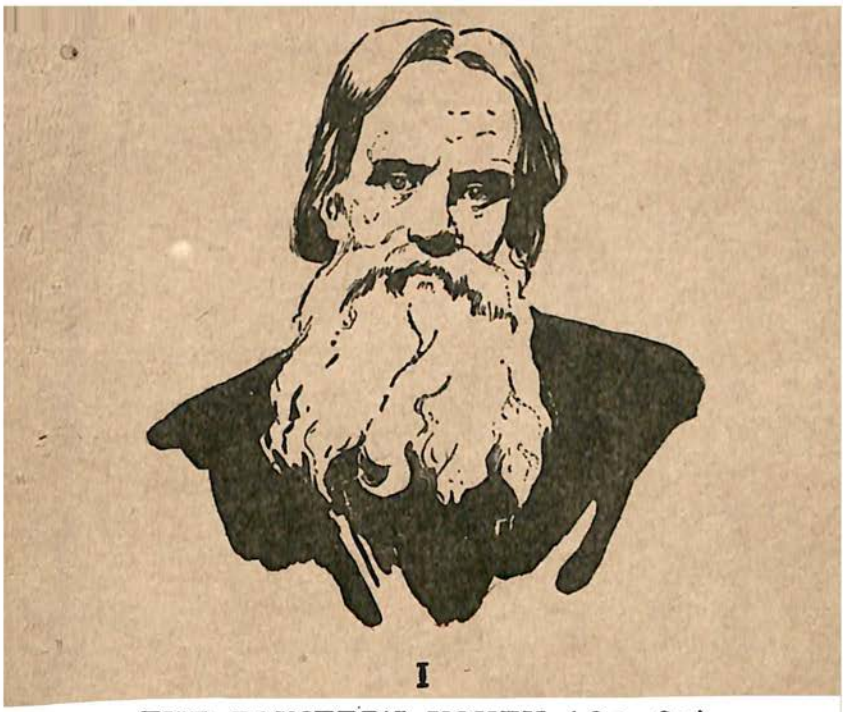

I

THE PAINTER'S YOUTH (1827–1854)

"Art is too tedious an employment for any not infatuated with it."

"The only artists I ever knew who achieved work of note in any sense whatever, went first through a steady training of several years and afterwards entered their studios with as unwearying a punctuality as business men attend their offices, worked longer hours than these, and had fewer holidays, partly because of their love for art, but also because of their deep sense of the utter uselessness of grappling with the difficulties besetting the happy issue of each contest, except at close and unflinching quarters."

"I have many times in my studio come to such a pass of humiliation that I have felt that there was no one thing that I had thought I could do thoroughly in which I was not altogether incapable." W. H. H.

UPON a wintry afternoon in London, in the year 1834, a little boy of six years old was standing on the stairs of a poor artist's

house, watching, through a window in the wall, the marvellous deeds of the man within. The man within was painting the "Burning of the Houses of Parliament." Scarlet and gold! Scarlet and gold! He used them up so quickly that he had to grind and prepare more and more. Every time he ground with the muller on the slab a fresh supply of vermilion and chrome yellow, there was a fresh flare up of the conflagration, another outburst of applause from the little boy. Meantime, the artist's wife put the kettle on the fire, and cut bread and butter as if nothing out of the way were going on; and by-and-by she and the father and their children sat down to tea. It seemed very strange to the little watchman that they could behave in this calm, everyday manner when such wonders were all about them in the room. Presently a porter came from a warehouse in Dyer's Court, Aldermanbury, where dwelt a merchant, Mr. William Hunt; and he took the little boy home to his father.

This little boy had been born on the 2nd April 1827, in Wood Street, Cheapside, and was christened William Holman at St. Giles's, Cripplegate. From the time that he could hold

anything he held a pencil. When he was about four years old he begged for a brush and some paints, and his joy is thus described:

"How I idolised the implements when they were in my possession! The camel-hair pencil, with its translucent quill, rosy-coloured silk binding up its delicate hair at the base, all embedded together as in amber, was an equal joy with the gem-like cakes of paint. I carried them about with me in untiring love. A day or two of this joy had not exhausted it, when, alas, alas, the brush was lost! Search proved to be all in vain. I remember going around and over every track about the house and garden. Waking up from sorrowing sleep, in which my continuing pain had been finally relieved by a dream of the lost treasure lying ensconced in some quiet corner, I hurried to the spot, only to find it vacant. The loss was the greater trouble because it was my first terrible secret. That my father should ever forgive me for losing so beautiful an object was to my distracted mind impossible. What could be done? My hair was straight, fine, and of camel brush hue. I cut off pieces to test its fitness for the office of paint-brush, and as I held a little lock I found that it would spread the tints fairly well; but what to do for a handle? Quill pens were too big, and I could not see how they could be neatly shortened. A piece of firewood carefully cut promised to make a more manageable stick. With my utmost skill I shaped this, and with a little length of coloured cotton I bound a stubborn sprout of hair upon the splint. I was disconcerted to find that it formed a hollow tube. It seemed perverse of fate to ordain that just in the handle where it was needed to be hollow it should be solid, and that the hair which should be

solid would form an empty pipe. Attempts to drill the stick into a tube failed, but there was an expedient for making the tuft fuller. Cutting a cross cleft in the bottom of the wood, I inserted a straight length of hair, which I then rebound with its crimson thread. With gum I managed patiently to bind down loose ends and to give an improving gloss to the whole. My fears grew apace, since every hour there was a danger of inquiry for the lost pencil. I summoned up, therefore, an assumption of assurance, trusting that my father would see no difference between my brush and his. I went forward to him, holding the trophy very tenderly lest it should fall to pieces. He turned his eyes, they became bewildered, his usual loving look made a frown from him the more to be dreaded. I fortified my spirit, saying, 'Thank you very much, father, for your brush.' He took it with, 'What's this?' and turned it over. Breathless I sobbed; he burst out laughing, and so brought a torrent of tears to my eyes. He exclaimed, 'Oh, I see, it's my brush, is it?" caught me up and tossed me aloft several times, ending with a scrubbing on my cheek from his close-shaven chin. This was the reception of my first work of art."[1]

The warehouse was a mysterious place full of laughter and talk by day; empty, silent, and vast at night when the master went over it with a bull's-eye lantern. A funny man called Henry Pinchers busied himself with velvet binding on the third floor. The jests of Henry Pinchers were of infinite charm. He had had to take two steps

[1] "Pre-Raphaelitism and the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood," vol. i., by W. Holman Hunt.

back for every step forward, he declared, one cold morning. "Then how did you get to the warehouse at all?" asked his delighted auditor. "Don't you see, you silly boy, I turned round and walked backwards!" said Henry Pinchers.

Other people were not much more clear than he in their answers to questions. Temple Bar was so called "because there was no other name"; and the martyrs were burnt at Smithfield "because they were martyrs." Whether the child found more satisfaction at the school to which, soon after, he was sent, does not appear. The lessons from the New Testament read to him there made a deep impression upon his mind, and were remembered in years to come. "The gain in thoughtfully-spent life is the continual disturbance of absolute convictions." But there are certain convictions of childhood which are never effaced.

The choice of a profession was not left to the last moment in those days. He was but twelve when his father asked him what he would like to be. "A painter!" he said at once; and the sorrowful silence that followed told him what

he knew already—that his choice was not looked on with approval.

His father had taken him away from school, and was about to find for him a situation in which he would have to go about with invoices for goods from nine in the morning till eight at night. No time for drawing; no time for painting in scarlet and gold! The idea did not harmonise with his presentiment of that which had to be. He set about to look for a place for himself, and explained the various qualifications that he possessed in the way of reading, writing, and arithmetic, to the master of a boy-friend who was leaving that gentleman's office. After some friendly chaff as to why he had not thought of enlisting as a Grenadier, to which he replied in all good faith, "I really should like your place better," his services were accepted, and his father—amused, and gratified, no doubt, by the master's ready interest in the boy—consented that he should stay.

The master, Mr. James, drew and painted himself. Far from discouraging his apprentice, he gave him his own box of oil-colours with direc-

tions how to prepare them; draughtsmanship was studied at a night school for mechanics, and the little salary expended on weekly lessons from a portrait-painter who had learnt from a pupil of a pupil of Sir Joshua Reynolds. His father, who had permitted this, was displeased, however, to find that on Mr. James's retirement he had time to visit the National Gallery; and once again, to avoid more unendurable subjection, he secured a place at the London Agency of Richard Cobden's Manchester business. Here he sat by himself in a little room that looked out on three blank walls, made entries in a ledger, pondered over the Bible stories heard at school, and the far-away land where they happened, drew pen-and-ink flies on the window with such accurate realism that his employer took out a handkerchief to brush them away, designed patterns for calicoes—taught by an occasional clerk. Here, too, he painted the portrait of an old orange-woman called Hannah, a Jewess, who came into the office and asked him to buy of her; "if only for a handsel to break her ill-luck of the morning."

The portrait was such a good likeness that

the employer laughed aloud when he saw it; the fame of the thing spread fast. One night his father told him of this remarkable picture, adding that he certainly ought to see it; but no sooner had he discovered the artist than he threatened to take him away altogether if stricter discipline were not observed. Hunt was now sixteen; he had borne with the city for four years; if he waited until he came of age it would be too late to think of art as a profession. He took his life into his own hands, and declared that he meant to become a student at the Royal Academy, that he must be allowed to draw at the British Museum that he might qualify himself to pass the entrance examination.

He just contrived to make both ends meet by copy and portrait work three days out of the six. He learnt more from fellow-students than from masters. The first real instruction came from a pupil of Wilkie's, who told him, as he sat copying "The Blind Fiddler," that Wilkie painted without dead colour underneath, and finished each bit in turn like a fresco-painter. After this he found out for himself

that quattrocentist work was very beautiful, and that the beauty of it was due to the early training of the artists in fresco. He was by nature hasty and impatient, and the city portrait-painter had encouraged rather than checked a tendency to handle his tools with loose bravura. He set himself to unlearn these lessons, to work with accurate and humble patience.

The hardest part of the endeavour had yet to come. Twice over he failed to find his name upon the list of those accepted as probationers for the Academy. Another precious year gone! His father appealed to him to give it up. "You are wasting time and energy. You can paint well enough to make friends admire you; but you cannot compete with others, who have genius to begin with, who have received an excellent education. Are you not yourself convinced?" The sense of discouragement was bitter. Six months more he asked for one other trial; if, for the third time, he failed, he would go back to business.

One day, as he stood at work in the Museum, a boy dressed in a velvet tunic, and belt, his bright brown hair curling over a turned-down

white collar, darted aside as he went by, gazed attentively at the drawing for a minute or two, and was off again. He knew the boy, for he had seen him take the Gold Medal at the Academy over the head of all the older students. He returned the visit on his way through the Elgin room, where young Millais was at work on the Ulysses. Quickly the younger artist turned round.

"I say, are not you the fellow doing that good drawing in No. XIII. room? You ought to be at the Academy."

"That is exactly my opinion. But, unfortunately, the Council have twice decided the other way."

"You just send the drawing you are doing now, and you'll be in like a shot. You take my word for it; I ought to know; I've been there as a student, you know, five years. I got the first medal last year in the antique, and it's not the first given me, I can tell you. . . . I say, tell me whether you have begun to paint? What? I'm never to tell; it is your deadly secret. Ah! ah! ah! that's a good joke! You'll be drawn and quartered without even being respectably hung by the Council of 'Forty' if you are known to have painted before completing your full course in the antique. Why, I'm as bad as you, for I've painted a long while. I say, do you ever sell what you do? So do I. I've often got ten pounds, and even double. Do you paint portraits?"

"Yes," I said; "but I'm terribly behind you."

"How old are you?" he asked.

"Well, I'm seventeen," I replied.

"I'm only fifteen just struck; but don't you be afraid. Why, there are students of the Academy just fifty and more. There's old Pickering; he once got a picture into the Exhibition, and he quite counts upon making a sensation when he has finished his course; but he is very reluctant to force on his genius. Will you be here to-morrow?"

"No," I whispered; "it's my portrait day, but don't betray me. Good-bye."

"Don't you be down in the mouth," he laughed out, as I walked away more light-hearted than I had been for months.[1]

At the next examination Hunt passed. "I told you so. I knew you'd soon be in," said Millais, when next they met at the Academy. It was the beginning of one of those rare friendships that make high things possible.

In the room at 83 Gower Street, where Millais painted while his mother sat at her work-table, Holman Hunt was now often to be found.

"They both help me, I can tell you," said Millais, as he stood with one hand on his father's shoulder, and the other on Mrs. Millais' chair. "He's really capital, and does a lot of useful things. Look what a good head he has. I have painted several of the old doctors from him. By making a little alteration in each, and putting on different kinds of

[1] "Pre-Raphaelitism," vol. i. p. 56.

beards; he does splendidly. Couldn't be better, could he? And he sits for hands and draperies too. And as for mamma, she reads to me and finds me subjects. She gets me all I want in the way of dresses and makes them up for me, and searches out difficult questions for me at the British Museum—in the library, you know. She's very clever, I can tell you." He stooped down and rubbed his curly head against her forehead, and then patted the "old daddy," as he called him, on the back. The father was then only about forty-seven. . . .[1]

Many and eager were the discussions that took place among the students. Hunt's first visit to the National Gallery, while he was still at the office, had not been altogether a success. The Age of Brown was flourishing. "Bacchus and Ariadne" was brown then. In fact when, some few years later, it was cleaned, and the original colours appeared, many people said they preferred it brown. Lost in the brown air, and quite unable to derive any pleasure from "Venus attired by the Graces," the new-comer, standing in front of Titian's masterpiece, inquired where were "the really grand paintings of the great master's?"

"That picture before you, sir, of 'Bacchus and Ariadne' is one of the finest specimens existing of the greatest

[1] "Pre-Raphaelitism," vol. i. p. 61.

colourist in the world." Here the custodian stopped to understand my paralysed expression. "Can't you see its beauty, sir?" "Not much, I must confess," I slowly stammered; "it is as brown as my grandmother's painted tea-tray." He stared hopelessly and then left me, only adding as a parting shot, "In the other rooms there are some wonderful Rubens, a consummate Guido, and miraculous heads by Vandyke, and several supremely fine Rembrandts; they will at least equal your grandmother's tea-tray; perhaps you'll be able to see some beauty in *them*." [1]

It took wonderful courage in those days to go on thinking that grass and trees were green, when all the eminent teachers maintained that so far as Art was concerned, they were brown, and that if you only painted them brown for several years "an eye for Nature" would come. They were green, however, at Ewell in Surrey, whither the young artist went one autumn. While he was there, his first picture, "Woodstock," was sold for £20. Furthermore, a fellow-student borrowed from Cardinal Wiseman vol. i. of "Modern Painters," and lent it to him for twenty-four hours. He sat up most of the night to read it.

He had fished out a copy of Keats from a box

[1] "Pre-Raphaelitism," vol. i. p. 19.

marked "This lot 4d.," and determined to paint a scene from "The Eve of St. Agnes." "It's like a parson," said Millais, laughing—a curious commentary on the reading of "Isabella"; but he soon came round. Millais had begun to assert his independence of judgment, to the no small wrath of his mother.

"Johnnie is behaving abominably," she said. "I want you, Hunt, to hear; you would not believe it; he shuts us out of the studio altogether; he is there now all alone. For twelve days now neither his father nor I have been allowed to enter the room. I appeal to you; is that the way to treat parents? He cannot expect to prosper, can he, now? I hope you will tell him so."

At this point a voice was heard from the studio. "Is not that Hunt? Don't mind what they say. Come here."[1]

Some time afterwards, a wonderful conversation on the relative merits of the Old Masters was interrupted by a quiet knock at the door.

"Who's there?" asked my companion.

"I have brought you the tea myself," said the mother.

I was hurrying forward when Millais stopped me with his hand, and a silent shake of the head.

"I really can't let you in, mamma; please put the tray down at the door, and I'll take it in myself."

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[1] "Pre-Raphaelitism," etc., vol. i. p. 80.

The mother made one more attempt; in vain. On went the talk. When Hunt had risen to say Good-bye,

"Oh no!" said Millais, "you must come in and see the old people," which brought to my mind the prospect of a terrible quarter of an hour.

Johnnie burst into the sitting-room, I came very bashfully behind. "Now, we've come to have a nice time with you, mamma and papa."

"We don't wish," said the mother, "to tax your precious time at all; we have our own occupations to divert us and engage our attention," and the crochet needles were more intently plied.

"Hoity-toity, what's all this? Put down your worsted work at once. I'm going to play backgammon with you directly;" and he straightway fetched the board from its corner, and laid it on the table before her.

"You know, Hunt, how shamefully he has been behaving, and I appeal to you to say whether it is not barefacedness to come in and treat us as though nothing had occurred," appealed the mother.

The *us* was chosen because at the time Johnnie had gone to his father with the guitar, placing it in his hand and remarking, as he put his arms round the paternal shoulders: "Now, as we are too busy in the day to see one another, it's more jolly that we should do so after work, so just you be a dear old papa, and now prove to Hunt what a splendid musician you are. Hunt used to practise the violin once, but his family didn't like it, and he could not be annoying them in music and painting, too, so he gave up his fiddling; but he's very fond of music. You play that exquisite air out

of Rigoletto!" And then turning to me he added, "There's no one in England has such an erect back as he has;" while to him he railingly said, "You want pressing, like a shy young lady."

His father was, however, already tuning the strings, when his son went over to the still irreconcilable mother, took her needles away, kissed her, and wheeled her in the chair round to the table where the opened chess-board was arranged awaiting her. The father had already commenced the air, which at my solicitation he repeated, and afterwards played "The Harmonious Blacksmith." The radiant faces of both parents gradually witnessed to their content; while the son beat time to the music, he paid no less attention to the game with the mother.

The two boys worked hard. They sat up all night long in Millais' studio; they kept themselves awake with coffee; they encouraged one another with talk; when Millais was tired to death of his own picture he worked on Hunt's, and Hunt on his. "Cymon and Iphigenia" and "The Eve of St. Agnes" were sent in to the Academy at eleven o'clock on the last night possible for sending in at all, and next day, in the exuberance of their joyful relief, they accompanied the Chartist procession to Kensington Common—Millais keen to see more of the fray than his companion thought prudent.

One great disappointment, bravely borne by

Millais, marked the Academy of that year; "Cymon and Iphigenia" was not hung. Hunt, however, gained an outspoken admirer in the person of an Italian student, Dante Gabriel Rossetti. "The best picture there!" said he, as he stood before "The Eve of St. Agnes," and he said it loudly too. He did not admire it the less because the subject was taken from Keats, whom he adored. He loved and studied "the Golden Gates of Ghiberti"—another point of agreement. He was passionately fond of Art, but dejected by the enforced study of glass bottles under the stern guidance of Ford Madox Brown. What was he to do? He could not go on with those bottles. Hunt consented that they should share a studio: and he became an ardent, fascinating, but very troublesome learner. He hummed and moaned, rocking himself to and fro as he sat thinking; he raved and raged while he was painting, causing angelic little girl models to weep; he sat up night after night before his easel, eating or sleeping as the fit came upon him. He was perpetually encircled by a crowd of noisy followers, and he had a most inconvenient way of showing them everything in the studio, and

asking them all to supper when the cupboard was bare—a very different friend from the un-Bohemian Millais, who in those days would not even smoke a pipe.

"I have always been told by artists that a pipe is of incalculable comfort to the nerves, that when harassed by the difficulties of a problem it solaces them."

"That is the very reason, it seems to me, for not smoking. A man ought to get relief only by solving his problem," said Millais.

Very different, too, from the genial atmosphere of his home was that of the Rossetti household, where there were strange gatherings of Italian exiles by the hearth.

"Then you are Pre-Raphaelite!" the other students cried, laughing, when self-willed Hunt quoted Sir Charles Ball to prove that the action of the demoniac boy in Raphael's "Transfiguration" was all wrong. The word was caught up, turned into a challenge, *P* and *R*, two of the mystic initials that were so soon to charm and to enrage London, were formed. The *B* was added at the suggestion of Rossetti, whose love of the mediæval at once required a "Brother-

hood." Need it be said that there had to be seven Brothers, and that the Brotherhood was to be kept a secret? Rossetti's brother William, who had never learnt how to draw; a nominal pupil of Hunt's, F. G. Stephens, who had never learnt how to paint; Woolner, who was a sculptor, and James Collinson, were quickly enlisted. "Collinson," said Rossetti, "is a born stunner."

"Where's your flock?" shouted out Millais. "I expected to see them behind you. Tell me all about it."

They held their first meeting in his studio, over a set of engravings of the frescoes in the Campo Santo at Pisa. The three leaders were all, at this time, eager to establish some starting-point for their art "which would be secure, if it were ever so humble." They admired what was true in the works of Raphael as much as any one else. "Pre-Raphaelitism is not Pre-Raphaelism," but they held that, since his day, pride and the dogged observance of rule without reference to Nature had destroyed sincerity. As they turned over the pages of the book, they hailed with delight in the old frescoes of Gozzoli that "freedom from

corruption, pride, and disease" for which they sought. "Think what a revelation it was to find such work at such a moment, and to recognise it with the triple enthusiasm of our three spirits!" They all agreed that they would make a series of designs from Keats in the new manner. Millais' "Lorenzo and Isabella," in his friends' judgment the most wonderful picture ever painted by a man under twenty, was the immediate fruit of this resolve.

Nature had gifted Rossetti with a hopeful temperament which was of no small service to Hunt in the dark days of discouragement that followed. When the latter was tempted to mourn over the waste of his young years in the city, the former pointed out to him that he had learnt to know men, and the ways of men, instead of mere bookish things that were "of very little use in life." What did it matter whether the sun went round the earth or the earth went round the sun? What did anything scientific matter in comparison with Dante, with the poetry of Browning, which he would recite, over the fire, by twenty pages at a time, with Tennyson and Henry Taylor

and Coventry Patmore?[1] When Mr. James, the city man, the owner of the original colour-box, reduced Hunt to despair by his damning criticism of the new picture "Rienzi," "But the man's a born fool!" exclaimed Rossetti, with screams of laughter. When pounds, shillings, and pence ran low, "Can you not understand," said he, "that there are hundreds of young artistocrats and millionaires growing up who will be only too glad to get due direction how to make the country as glorious as Greece was, and as Italy?" In Paris, in Belgium, in the country he was the most delightful of companions, and it was he who led as the Brethren walked up and down Stanhope Street after their work, singing the *Marseillaise* or *Mourir pour la patrie.*

Throughout his youth, however, Rossetti acted on impulse, without consideration as to the effect upon others. When it was time to send in for the Academy he was not quite ready with the charming picture painted in Hunt's studio, and, for the sake of a few more

[1] Hunt, who had written poetry himself, mostly in couplet form, and in the Spenserian stanza, gave it up on account of Rossetti's greater proficiency.

days in which to finish, he sent instead to the Hyde Park Gallery, which opened a week earlier than Burlington House. "The Girlhood of Mary, Virgin," signed with the mystic P.R.B., the meaning of which was then unknown, except to the seven Brothers, appeared, therefore, a week earlier than Hunt's "Rienzi" and Millais' "Lorenzo and Isabella," signed with the same initials, and, for good and for evil, Rossetti began to be spoken of as the precursor of a new school. The effect on him was twofold. Unable to endure hostile criticism, at the first touch of it, the year after, when he showed "The Annunciation," he resolved that he would never again exhibit in public; but, pleased at the pre-eminence given him by those who were not behind the scenes, he withdrew from partnership with Hunt in the studio; and more and more, as time went on, from his society and that of Millais.

"Rienzi" honourably hung in the large room, pendant to "Lorenzo and Isabella," made a favourable impression, but was not sold until after the closing of the Academy; and meantime, the landlord seized Hunt's books, furniture,

and sketches, and he was obliged to return to his family. As soon as he could he paid the man, who thought he had been "shamming poverty." At one time he was not able to post a letter because he had not even a penny wherewith to buy the stamp; as he threw himself back on a chair, he thrust his hand between the back and the seat, and lo, it came in contact with half-a-crown! When he went to Lambeth to paint the background of "Claudio and Isabella," the man who carried his traps was so much better dressed that the porter was taken for the artist. Still, he was in good heart, and he and Millais, eager to improve the reputation already gained, were hard at work upon two large works, "Christians escaping from Persecuting Druids" and "Christ in the Carpenter's Shop," when all at once a derisive paragraph appeared in one of the papers, betraying the significance of the three letters, P.R.B., and holding up the new school to ridicule. Munro the sculptor had wormed the secret out of Rossetti, and, after promising not to tell, he had passed it on to a journalist.

The storm of anger which followed was

curiously out of proportion to the cause. *The Germ*, a magazine started at Rossetti's instigation, to be the organ of Pre-Raphaelites, would have failed, it may be, in any case, for lack of funds; but jealousy, and that hatred of light which is peculiar to old institutions, can alone account for the venomous reception of the new pictures, when once the secret of the letters became known. The Academy sprang to arms; the older artists, and their pupils, waxed furious. They enlisted literature on their side. Dickens joined in the hue and cry. With the honourable exception of *The Spectator*, every single paper attacked the men who had dared to break with tradition. Raphael had been insulted; Raphael was, it appeared, the idol of all England.

Ruskin came, flashing, to the rescue a year later, with a letter to *The Times*, in which he declared that since the days of Albert Dürer, there had been nothing in art so earnest or so complete as the pictures of Millais and Holman Hunt. They were not this year hung together; they were placed in a less favourable light. The onslaughts of the press were well

sustained. "Valentine and Sylvia" (the subject taken from Shakespeare's "Two Gentlemen of Verona") had suffered, in part, from Hunt's distress of mind and the want of means occasioned by the bad conduct of a man whom he trusted; even after Ruskin's letter no one ventured to buy. Nobody came to him for a portrait now. His father's acquaintance in the city offered to bet £10 that any picture of his would be sent back within a week. Anonymous insults poured in upon him. A publisher, who had asked for illustrations of Longfellow, declined to publish them. Debt was staring him in the face, and failure seemed absolute.

At this crisis of fortune, when he had resolved that he must give up Art and adopt some other line of life—preferably that of a settler in the backwoods—Millais came forward. He had freed himself from personal straits only a week or two earlier; now, with the warm concurrence of his father and mother, he offered to share every penny he had with his friend. His generous will to help overcame all resistance; the money—repaid the following year—was advanced; and the two Brothers went

off to Surbiton together, to paint "Ophelia" and "The Hireling Shepherd." "Valentine and Sylvia" had been retouched and sent to Liverpool, where a prize of £50 was offered for the finest painting.

Never did the two gentlemen, even in their native Verona, provoke more comment than followed their footsteps wherever they appeared in England. Immediately, anonymous insults in letters and papers began again. Week after week went by; there was not a word from the authorities. At last it grew intolerable. The painter turned on his tormentors. He had never seriously expected such distinction for a moment; but he determined to write to the committee, and ask, by way of bitter satire, why the prize had not been awarded to him. Happily, his designs, and a book in which he was interested, kept him up too late to begin that night. Next morning, as he sat at work not far from the house, he heard Millais' voice, "Another letter from Liverpool"! "Valentine and Sylvia" had won the prize; and they gave three cheers for the Council in chorus.

The happy days of comradeship at the old, ghost-haunted house called Worcester Park Farm glided by all too fast. Millais became intent upon "The Huguenot"; Hunt continued "The Hireling Shepherd" while the sun shone; after dark he threw his strength into "The Light of the World." Whenever the moon was full, although it was so cold that people skated in the daytime, he would work out-of-doors from nine at night until five the next morning. For the most part he enjoyed undisturbed solitude, but now and then a friendly guardian of the public peace came to see what he was about.

"Have you seen other artists painting landscape about here?" he inquired.

"I can't exactly say as I have at this time o' night," said the policeman.

His nocturnal studies continued to arouse interest even after the return to London. As he was coming back to Chelsea on a 'bus one night the driver entertained him with descriptions of the eccentric persons who lived there, Carlyle among them, "and I've been told as how he gets his living by teaching

people to write." Then he went on confidentially, "But I'll show you another queer cove if you're coming round the corner. You see him well from the 'bus. He's a cove, in the first place, as has a something standing all night at one winder, while he sits down at the other, or stands, and seemingly is a-drawing of it. He doesn't go to bed like other Christians, but stays long after the last 'bus has come in; and, as the perlice tells us, when the clock strikes four, out goes the gas, down comes the gemman, opens the street door, runs down Cheyne Walk as hard as he can pelt, and when he gets to the end he turns and runs back again, opens his door, goes in, and nobody sees no more of him."

Pre-Raphaelitism went steadily forward. "The Light of the World" was not yet ready, but the wonderful Academy of 1852 contained "The Hireling Shepherd," Millais' "Ophelia" and "The Huguenot," and Ford Madox Brown's fine picture, painted after the same method, "Christ Washing Peter's Feet." "The Strayed Sheep," a beautiful little landscape begun for a gentleman

who admired "The Hireling Shepherd," but did not wish for so large a picture, was painted at Fairlight, soon afterwards. At the Academy of 1853 "Claudio and Isabella" hung in the first room. In 1854 "The Light of the World" was finished, and sold to Mr. Combe of Oxford. "The Awakened Conscience" went to the Academy the same year.

And now a plan that had been in the artist's mind ever since, as a child, he listened to the words of the New Testament at school, found sudden fulfilment. The cry of the East was in his ears; he would go to the East, and paint a sacred picture there. As on so many other occasions throughout his life, he met with violent opposition. He would lose all that he had gained at such cost and have to begin over again on his return; he would find nothing but overgrown weeds, no beauty that was not tenfold more beautiful in England; he would get Syrian fever and be an invalid for the rest of his days; he would die like Wilkie. Rossetti said that local colour interfered with the poetry of design. Ruskin said that he was giving up the real purpose of his life, which was to train

a new school of art. What Millais said does not appear. What Millais did was to help in the packing, which had been left to the last minute, so that there was no time for dinner, and to rush to the buffet for any "likely food" that he could find and toss it into the railway carriage after the train had begun to move.

Upon a parting gift from Rossetti were written these lines from "Philip van Artevelde":

> "There's that betwixt us been, which we remember
> Till they forget themselves, till all's forgot,
> Till the deep sleep falls on them in that bed
> From which no morrow's mischief knocks them up."

II

THE EAST

"I regard the man who has not sojourned in a tent as one who has not thoroughly lived."

W. H. H.

The first period of life was over. The mystic letters were used no more; after the savage onslaughts of the press it had been determined that

Pre-Raphaelites should be recognised by their work alone, not by any arbitrary signal. Henceforth each of the Brothers followed his own line. Marriage came in due course. Mr. Holman Hunt has been twice married; he has two sons and a daughter.

"The Scapegoat"—a subject which he had thought of suggesting to Landseer—was painted by the shore of the Dead Sea. After many negotiations, for the country was in a troubled state and he risked his life by going, he encamped there, with a little band of followers to protect him, and a goat. Soleiman, one of the Arabs, desired—though only seven years younger than himself—to be his son. By what name should he call him? *Hunt?* That was no name at all. *Holman?* That was not much better. *William*, however, pronounced "Wullaum," he "found very good."

One night, when the dews fell heavily, and they were some way from the encampment, Hunt, afraid of the effect of a chill, began waltzing—with his gun for a partner—to keep himself warm. Soleiman was overcome with amazement. "Henceforth let me be your brother,"

said he—unconscious that he had become a Pre-Raphaelite—as he flung his arms round the neck of this wonderful man. "You are indeed inspired; you dance like a dervish; you *are* one. Can you do it again?" "Yes, my brother," and away the wonderful man went, a second and a third time, again and yet again. He was asked to repeat the performance for the benefit of the others, who yelled with delight when they heard of it, but this he declined to do; and the next day Soleiman invited him to marry the daughter of the sheik his uncle, and to become sheik instead of himself when the old man died, that he might lead the tribe in battle, and act as dancing-dervish in times of peace. Where had he been born? In London? What was London?—a mountain? or a plain? Not a city like Jerusalem with walls and gates and shops?—"Never, my brother! I will never believe that you are a citizen—never! I know you are an English bedawee, and you were born in a tent." In spite of all this filial and fraternal affection, Soleiman was not much good when danger threatened. "There are robbers," he declared one day; "they are

coming this way—one, two, three, on horseback, and two—wait, three—yes, four on foot. You must put down your umbrella, shut up your picture, cover it with stones. They will not be here for an hour. We will go up in the mountains." "No," said Hunt, he should stay where he was, it was a good work that he had in hand; Allah would help him; he was quite content. After several passionate appeals, off went Soleiman by himself, taking the donkey. The robbers presently appeared, seven of them, on foot and on horseback, armed with long spears, with guns and swords and clubs. The painter painted on unconcernedly. They drew up in a semicircle round him, and the chief shouted for water. The artist looked at him from his head to his horse's feet—at the others also, and then resumed his work. Again the chief clamoured. They might have water, the artist said at last, since the day was hot; but Englishmen were not the servants of Arabs, and he was an Englishman; they must fetch it themselves. And he continued to paint. "Are you here alone?" they inquired. "No; there was an Arab." Thereupon they requested

that he might be called. "But *I* don't want him," said the artist. "*We* want him." "Well then, *you* call him. His name is Soleiman." Soleiman, however, made no reply. "There is no one, or he would answer," they said distrustfully. "He is afraid. You know best how to reassure him." At length Soleiman came slowly down through the rocks, driving the donkey. A long conversation followed—a wonderful description by his "brother" of the gun with two souls which he had, of the pistol that would fire more than five times without reloading, of his accomplishments as a dancing-dervish and as a story-teller (especially about Lot), of the manner in which he wrote all day in coloured inks the sky, the mountains, the plain, the sea, even the salt, on that large paper.

The Arabs became intensely suspicious. What could these things mean? He had the white goat led over the ground, they supposed, to charm it. He was a magician. He would go back to England; he would wipe out the coloured inks with a sponge; he would find the Cities of the Plain underneath; he would be lord of a great treasure. For the present they agreed that they would let him alone; but

he considered it prudent to waltz home that night.

"My dreams kept me with the Brotherhood," he says. Once he had fallen asleep within his tent, he was back in England among the old set, "talking of plans and thoughts beloved of both."

The Academy hung "The Scapegoat" on the line; and it was sold for £450, but "The Finding of the Saviour in the Temple," begun in Jerusalem, could not be finished for some time; he was compelled to work at smaller pictures which would bring in ready money. In the end, after a friendly consultation with his old foe, Dickens, he asked and obtained for it £5500, the largest sum that had ever yet been paid for an English picture.

"Isabella" was painted in Florence in days of great sadness; a year after the artist completed, with his own hand, the marble monument designed for his young wife.

"The Shadow of Death" ("Is not this the Carpenter"?) was painted on his return to the East, and yet again he went thither, to bring back with him "The Triumph of the

Innocents" and "The Holy Fire." A number of Mahommedan ladies, from the harem of a neighbouring "effendi," came to the house at Jerusalem, and asked to see "The Innocents," while it was still in progress. The leading lady counted up the figures.

"Seventeen babies in the large picture, and several more in the smaller one, with the Sib Miriam,[1] Al Issa Messiah, and Mar Jusif. This is very well," she said, "but on the Day of Judgment what will you do?" "Ah," I returned, "I can trust only in the mercy of the Beneficent; but why, pray, ask me that question?" She returned, "Because the souls of these beings that you have made will be required of you, and what will you say then?" My reply, justified on metaphysical principles, was, "I hope every one of these will be present to justify me." She looked bewildered, but then turning to her flock, re-echoed my assurance, saying, "Oh, if indeed you can satisfy God the Just with their souls, it will be well with you!"[2]

Music and rosy dawn are the inspiration of "May Morning"; on Magdalen Tower a band of choristers chant their hymn to the Light of Heaven, according to ancient custom, upon the 1st of May. "The Lady of Shalott" is fresh in

[1] The Virgin Mary.
[2] "Pre-Raphaelitism," etc., vol. ii. p. 328.

the recollection of all who have seen her. A larger version of "The Light of the World" has been purchased recently by Mr. Charles Booth, for the benefit of the nation. Since that time the artist has not been able to work.

In 1881 Rossetti died. His former comrade offered to visit him when he heard of the illness; but the offer was courteously declined by Mr. William Rossetti. In 1896 grave fears began to be expressed about Millais. "The truth of his doomed condition, at first resolutely ignored, came very suddenly to him, and then day by day he stepped down into the grave, but never lost his composure or noble personality." These quiet words are the fitting close of the tribute paid to him by his oldest and greatest friend, in that book which is a record as much of friendship as of art.

III

THE SUBJECT PICTURES

"One scarcely express purpose in our reform, left unsaid by reason of its fundamental necessity, was to make art a hand-maid in the cause of justice and truth." W. H. H.

"The vital ambition of an artist is to serve as high priest and expounder of the excellence of the works of the Creator—choosing the highest types and combinations of His handiworks, as the Greeks taught the after-world to do, so that men's admiration may be fascinated by the perfection of the works of the Great Author of all, and men's life thus may be a continual joy and solace."

The aim set forth in this declaration is not the aim of any school, however distinguished, but the aim, conscious or unconscious, of all great painters. It has been constantly pursued throughout the life of him who wrote these words; if we did not put this first, we should err.

The secondary purpose of his work—to give England what she has never had before, a school of artists of her own—of vast and infinite grandeur though it be, is yet subservient.

Many technical questions beset a true revival which are of deeper interest to the actors in it than to the public at large. Such was the question of the introduction of oil as a

medium in the old days; such was the question of the proper way to render brightness in our air. "You vagabond!" said Millais—as he watched Hunt painting in transparent colour, with light sable brushes, over a ground of half-moist white, the landscape of "The Hireling Shepherd"—"that's just the way I paint flowers!" They had arrived at this method by independent lines of thought. To them, and to their brother artists, it was most important. Millais, delighted, proposed that they should keep it a secret—and instantly confided it to Ford Madox Brown. The outer world was more concerned with the fact that the sun could be made to shine upon canvas than with the way in which it was brought about. The one inevitable condition of the truth of a revival is always, by one method or by another, a return to Nature. This had been accomplished; and the world, as ever, divided—the few hailing what they saw as a revelation, the many denouncing it as heresy.

When a picture by the first Pre-Raphaelite was carried in triumph through the streets of Florence there were those who named that

quarter Borgo Allegri; but there were those who declared that art was at an end now the Byzantine tradition had been broken. When the pictures of the last Pre-Raphaelite shone out at Burlington House, there were happy people who vowed they looked like "openings in the wall"; there were also those who declared that art had come to an end now the tradition of Raphael was ignored. Steadily, through evil report and good report, the painter went his way. He did not hold—as Millais came to hold in after years—that it was the business of the artist to find out what most people wanted, and to paint that. He did not hold—as Rossetti held—that it was the business of the artist to impose his will on a select band of followers, trained by himself to believe that the age of Dante was the Golden Age, and that colour should be based on the principles of illumination. He held that an artist was accountable to God. He held that an Englishman should study those minds, those words, which have more power over England than any others—should help to make those clear.

Shakespeare had led him to "rate lightly

that kind of art devised only for the initiated, and to suspect all philosophies which assume that the vulgar are to be left for ever unredeemed."

He hated newspapers because "the influence of writers who have had no other qualification to judge of art matters than the possession of more or less literary facility, has been deterrent and ever fatal to a steady advance of taste."

There are two aspects. Art "presents the form of a nation's spirit, exactly as the sounding atoms on a vibrating plane make a constant and distinct pattern to the sound of a given note." Likewise, "All art from the beginning served for the higher development of men's minds. It has ever been valued as good to sustain strength for noble resolves."

Determined to serve his generation, not as a playfellow, not as a tyrant, but as a master, he followed singly and faithfully that conviction which had led him from childhood to think of the Bible as the great factor in human exist-

ence. To the interpretation of the Life of Christ he gave the best years of his manhood. In order to understand it more thoroughly he broke away from comfort, he risked success at the moment when first she smiled on him, he left the friend whom he loved. It was not enough to paint "The Light of the World," to set before the eyes of his countrymen the eternal King, the eternal Priest, knocking at the door of the human heart, barred darkly in behind the weeds of selfishness. He would go to the country where the King dwelt. He would show:

(1) The coming of God to earth, as it was seen by the dim eyes of tradition, of mortal learnedness, when there was found within the precincts of the Temple, among the Rabbis, a Child who had forgotten to return to his parents.

(2) The oneness of Creation in the form of the suffering creature dying by the Dead Sea shore—the Goat, the type of the Lamb.

(3) The sacredness of labour, in the form of the Son of Man resting from toil in that low workshop where the Virgin Mother hoarded the gifts of regal wisdom.

(4) The young immortal beauty ever to be seen by the Child of God, by the spirit of maiden purity, turning the torrent of death into the river of life, making the darkness as the noon-day.

To the Bible, Holman Hunt gave his manhood—to Shakespeare, his youth! No one who desires to add to the store of England's thought but must, at one time or another, plunge deep into the mind of her greatest thinker. It is a sign of the unthinking nature of English art that, before this time, there were no illustrations of Shakespeare worth the name. It is characteristic of the pre-eminently thoughtful nature of this artist that he should have chosen two subjects that are often misunderstood, from two plays that are hardly ever acted—the subject of *Forgiveness* from the "Two Gentlemen of Verona;" the subject *Death-to-be-preferred-before-slavery* from "Measure for Measure."

The duty of the Forgiveness of Sins—which has been well defined in the one word, *Affection*—a duty canvassed and discussed everywhere—is, in Shakespeare, deprived of the very aspect of a duty. It seems to have appeared to him not only natural but inevitable that anybody should forgive anybody anything. The

most astounding of all his reconciliations is that of the "Two Gentlemen." Valentine has to forgive Proteus; Sylvia has to forgive Proteus and Valentine into the bargain; Julia has to forgive Proteus; and Proteus has to forgive himself. Upon the stage we have seen an actress, in despair at the difficulty of the thing, turn her back to the audience and lean against a tree while the discussion was going on; but in the picture Sylvia kneels, her hand left trustingly in that of Valentine, and we have no sooner looked at it than we believe and understand. It is the same with that difficult moment of "Measure for Measure," when the two sides of life speak in the brother and sister:

> "Death is a fearful thing,"
> "And shamed life a hateful."

The nun, we are sometimes told, is a repellent person; what business had she to urge her brother to die when she could save him by doing wrong herself? To look at "Claudio and Isabella" is to believe her and to understand.

Another picture owes its motto to one of Edgar's mad bursts of song in "King Lear."

> "Sleepest or wakest thou, jolly shepherd?
> Thy sheep be in the corn;
> And yet one blast of thy minnikin mouth,
> Thy sheep shall take no harm."

It is not an actual shepherd and shepherdess who are seated in this leafy English landscape, among the green pastures and by the still waters. Still less is it the kind of shepherd and shepherdess that Watteau, Fragonard, and the china manufactory of Dresden have accustomed us to associate with the words. Who and what are they, those careless people in the bright sunshine, letting the sheep eat the corn that kills them and the unripe apples? The shepherd's crook lies idle on the ground. He has found a death's-head moth; he is too busy showing it to his companion to have any use for that. She is flattered and pleased that he should attend to her rather than to the sheep.

When this picture was painted, the Oxford Movement was in the air; the shepherd and the shepherdess were alike busy with the death's-head moth.

Turning to modern minds, the poet whose word weighed most with England at the time was undoubtedly Tennyson. A verse from "In Memoriam" describes "The Ship." "The Lady of Shalott" gave the subject of a work which took twelve years in painting. It was enlarged from a small design in a volume of Tennyson illustrated by Hunt, Millais, and Rossetti; and by several other artists, not of their persuasion. This particular illustration did not find favour with the poet, he objected to the lady's hair, to her manner of wearing it. The dream has been changed into a profound allegory. The lady is—if we mistake not—the artist who, through neglect of the divine gift of reflective imagination, has failed in the high purpose of art. It was hers to weave the Quest of the Holy Grail, as she saw it in the magic mirror. If she had stayed at her appointed work, all

had gone well. But she looked out of window to see Sir Lancelot—not the Sir Lancelot of Tennyson, but a boastful, pleasure-loving knight, going on his way in the sunlight, with two trumpeters before him. Then came the curse upon her, for the order of the world was broken, the order of the world all about her, in the flower of the earth, in the bird of the air, in the stars, governed and guided each by its own angel. On one side of her room order is strength as seen in Hercules—on the other submission, as typified in the earlier design by the Cross, in the later by the Nativity. This order she has broken, against this order she has sinned. The lovely picture of her weaving the likeness of the Holy Grail itself will come to naught. But up above there chimes the one word, *Spes;* even for those who have failed there is hope."

The lady was trying to be a realist:

> "Out flew the web, and floated wide.
> The mirror cracked from side to side."

"A man's work must be the reflex of a living image in his own mind, and not the icy double of the facts themselves. It will be seen that we were never realists. I think art would have ceased to have the slightest interest for any of us had the object been only to make a representation, elaborate or unelaborate, of a fact in nature. Independently of the conviction that such a system would put out of operation the faculty making man "like a God," it was apparent that a mere imitator gradually comes to see nature claylike and finite, as it seems when illness brings a cloud before the eyes."

The practice of making independent studies for pictures which was dear to the heart of Rossetti, was discouraged by Hunt and Millais because they feared to lose unity of effect if they dwelt upon details except in their relation to the whole. They painted, first the background, after the manner described, straight from Nature; if possible, they placed the figures in the open air and studied them outside the studio walls.

There are curious differences to be noted whenever the picture is repeated, and they seem to be always in the direction of something more complex than the original. In the larger version of "The Hireling Shepherd," he is far more subtle and sophisticated, while the shepherdess looks older and more scornful. In the smaller version of "The Triumph of the Innocents," the hues of a soft, moonlit night prevail, the Virgin is just a sweet mother, the Child is blessing the children. In the larger version moonlight intensified, which was found by means of a lens to be that of the sun, bathes the children; the Virgin, who is much older, gazes upon them with eyes in which a joyful wonder seems to be fighting still with almost unconquerable sorrow; the Child, a wheat-ear in his hand, has thrown himself back in an ecstasy of divine laughter. The large water-colour of "Christ among the Rabbis," the rainbow halo encircling the head of the Child as he meditates, while the dark-eyed boys, Nicodemus and Stephen, look on, is

different in every respect from "The Finding in the Temple."

IV

PORTRAITS AND OTHER WORKS

"An artist should always make sure that in his treatment of Nature alone he is able to incorporat some new enchantment to justify his claim as a master of his craft, doing this at times without any special interest in the subject he may illustrate." W. H. H.

The principle given above has been followed in such works as "Amaryllis," "The Bride of Bethlehem," and "Sorrow."

There is but one portrait reproduced in this book, and that a copy of a very early one which was rescued from destruction by the artist's mother. He was going to rub it out that he might use the ground for something else, and he objected to the rescue because it would cost him 3s. 6d.; but she stood firm. The portrait painted of himself in later life, palette in hand, was executed for the gallery of great artists by themselves at the Uffizi. The haunting "Head of Rossetti," with fixed, intent eyes, was taken

from a pastel sketch, made for Woolner when he was out in Melbourne. He had appealed to his Pre-Raphaelite Brothers to give him some tangible proof of their kinship which would help him to find clients, because their names were better known than his, and often in the paper. They held a meeting, therefore, in Millais' studio, worked the whole day, and sent him out their portraits by each other. Rossetti's absorbed gaze is explained by the fact that he was drawing Hunt at the moment. "Bianca" was painted in tempera from a beautiful young American.

One portrait called "The Birthday"—the picture of a lady—could not but be wronged by any description whatever.

Day after day last autumn, two little rooms in Leicester Square were crowded with eager thousands, thronging to gaze upon the pictures that, when they first appeared, no one would buy. Outside, the fog often held sway. Within, light shone from every wall, the light of dawn from "May Morning"; the glowing light of

noonday from "The Strayed Sheep"; moonlight from "The Ship"; soft starlight from "The Triumph"; the light upon the sea, the downs, the mountains, the faces of men and women in the open field; the light of strange fire; the light of human eyes inspired with hope and purpose; the radiant light of spiritual force.

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF THE CHIEF PICTURES MENTIONED

Portrait of the Artist by Himself at Seventeen	1844
Woodstock (first picture sold—for £20)	1846
The Eve of St. Agnes (The Flight of Madeline's Porphyro)	1846
Rienzi	1848
A Converted British Family sheltering a Missionary	1850
Claudio and Isabella	1850
Valentine and Sylvia	1851
The Hireling Shepherd	1851
The Strayed Sheep	1852
The Light of the World	1853
The Awakened Conscience	1853
The Scapegoat	1854
The Finding of Christ in the Temple	1854
Isabella, or The Pot of Basil	1867
The Shadow of Death	1869
The Ship	1875

78 LIST OF PICTURES

The Triumph of the Innocents	1875–1882
May Morning	1889
The Lady of Shalott	1889
The Holy Fire	1892

These dates are approximate; the painting of many of the pictures extended over several years.

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